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C O N F I D E N T I A L LIMA 000680

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [BL](#) [PE](#)
SUBJECT: PERU-BOLIVIA RELATIONS TENSE OVER EX-MINISTERS'
ASYLUM

REF: A. LIMA 0602
[1](#)B. LA PAZ 00474
[1](#)C. LIMA 00394

Classified By: Ambassador P. Michael McKinley for
reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Peru's relations with Bolivia took another sour turn after Bolivian President Evo Morales called President Alan Garcia "chabacano" (vulgar) over Peru's granting of political asylum to three former cabinet members of Bolivian ex-President Gonzalo "Goni" Sanchez de Lozada's administration. MFA officials told us the GOP had granted the asylum on humanitarian grounds because it was unlikely they would receive due process or a fair trial in Bolivia. This second flap between the two countries (and their leaders) in less than two months marks a new low in bilateral relations. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) In March, Peru and Bolivia traded sharp words following GOB assertions that Peru's lawsuit at The Hague against Chile over a maritime dispute adversely impacted Bolivia's historic quest for an outlet to the Pacific ocean (refs B,C). At that time, President Morales referred to President Garcia as "overweight and uninformed, neo-liberal and a traitor," while accusing him of playing personal and partisan politics. Morales' jabs were partially in response to Garcia's provocative remarks that the maritime dispute was a one-on-one discussion between Peru and Chile, and that Bolivia had "itself to blame" for poorly managing its own negotiations with Chile on access to the sea.

[1](#)3. (C) This latest spat surfaced when the media reported that up to six former ministers from the Sanchez de Lozada government had fled to Peru to avoid possible charges of 'genocide' scheduled at a May 18 hearing in La Paz. The ex-cabinet members include Mirtha Quevedo (Popular Participation), Javier Torres Gotia (Health), and Jorge Torres Obleas (Economic Development). According to the MFA, these three former Ministers have already been granted asylum or a (roughly similar) refugee status in Peru. Other former Bolivian ministers possibly in Peru include Guido Anez, Yerko Kukoc and Hugo Carvajal, though this has not been confirmed. All of these officials were serving during the events of "Black October" 2003 when security forces attempted to run a blockade in El Alto in order to bring fuel supplies to beleaguered La Paz; subsequent social unrest resulted in the deaths of more than sixty people and the fall of Sanchez de Lozada's government. (Note: President Sanchez de Lozada and

his Defense Minister Sanchez Berzain fled to exile in the U.S.)

14. (C) MFA Director General for Human Rights, Juan Pablo Vegas (protect), told us the GOP had granted the former Bolivian Ministers asylum because they were judged unlikely to receive due process or a fair trial in Bolivia. He speculated that other former Bolivian Ministers reportedly present in Peru could also seek, and if so likely receive, asylum in the future. MFA Director for Defense and Security Ambassador Julio Florian (protect) told us the GOP had no problem giving safe harbor to the former GOB ministers, just as it had recently done with Venezuelan opposition leader Manuel Rosales (ref. A).

15. (C) Florian explained that the GOP distrusts both the governments of Venezuela and Bolivia and considers them capable of distorting the facts to suit their own political purposes. Florian added that Peru perceives a long term threat in Bolivia's support for Aymara irredentism in Peru's Puno region bordering both Bolivia and Chile, and that "our problems in the south place a foreign policy premium on maintaining good relations with Ecuador." Echoing the primacy of Ecuador in Peru's current regional policy calculus, a noted regional analyst told us that Peru's relations with Bolivia were presently at a historical low, and had been worse only in the 1920s when Chile had sought to negotiate a sea access deal with Bolivia behind Peru's back.
MCKINLEY